



**REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 9, 2011
County Administration Center**

Voting Members Present

Hon. Cynthia Bashant (Chair); Susan Bower (for Alfredo Aguirre); Katherine Smith-Brooks; Jorge Cabrera; Lynn Neault (for Constance Carroll); Danny Melgoza (for Supervisor Greg Cox); Margie deRuyter; Jack Bucci (for Bonnie Dumanis); Lt. Jim Bolwerk (for William D. Gore); Stephanie Trolinger (for Susan Golding); Dr. Dawn Griffin; Laura Mustari (for Paula Guerra); Margarita Holguin; Dixie Galapon (for Margaret Iwanaga-Penrose); Mack Jenkins; Naomi Chavez (for Barbara Jimenez); Pam Smith (for Nick Macchione); Cristina Sanchez (for Tilisha Martin); John Philips (for Thomas Edward Montgomery); Walter Philips (Vice-chair); Barbara Ryan; JoAnne Ventre; Loretta Middleton (for Randolph Ward); Daphyne Watson; Charles Wilson; Amethyst Cureg (for Wilma Wooten) Roseann Myers (for Debra Zanders-Willis) (Secretary)

Alternate Members Present

Visitors Present

Stephen Carroll (San Diego Youth Services); Sam Rigby (LEAP); Dimitre Allen (LEAP); Leticia Trujillo (LEAP); Mercediz Hand, (LEAP); Samantha Alvarez (LEAP); Aimee Zeitz (San Diego Grantmakers)

Staff Present

Renee Rambus, Harold Randolph, Tonya Torosian

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. by Honorable Cynthia Bashant.

II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. Approval of the Minutes – May 6, 2011

Motion made by Laura Mustari and seconded by Jorge Cabrera to accept the minutes of May 6, 2011. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Report from the Chair

None.

V. Action Items (Motion Required)

1. Approve By-Laws and Administrative Code revisions as submitted and forward to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.

Motion made by Barbara Ryan and seconded by Margarita Holguin to approve the By-Laws and Administrative Code revisions as submitted and forward to the Board of Supervisors for adoption. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Nominate for submission to and confirmation by the Board of Supervisors, San Diego Grantmakers, Executive Director, Nancy Jamison to fill the Representative Philanthropic Community seat.

Motion made by Charles Wilson and seconded by John Philips to approve the nomination for submission to and confirmation by the Board of Supervisors, San Diego Grantmakers, Executive Director, Nancy Jamison to fill the Representative Philanthropic Community seat. Motion passed unanimously.

3. San Diego Domestic Violence Council's request support to sponsor the 2011 Hope in the Park event on Saturday, October 8, 2011.

Motion made by Margie de Ruyter and seconded by Laura Mustari to approve the San Diego Domestic Violence Council's sponsorship request of \$5,000 to support the 2011 Hope in the Park event on Saturday, October 8, 2011. Recusal for the record: Dawn Griffin, Ph.D.

4. California State University San Marcos ACE Scholars request to sponsor the Building Better Futures" event on Wednesday, October 19, 2011.

Motion made by Katherine Smith-Brooks and seconded by Lynn Neault to approve California State University San Marcos ACE Scholars sponsorship request of \$2,500 to sponsor the Building Better Futures" event on Wednesday, October 19, 2011. Recusals for the record: Naomi Chavez and Loretta Middleton.

VI. Presentations

- A. LEAP Speak Out Results: Panel Presentation; Sam Rigby, LEAP Coordinator, Dimitre Allen, LEAP Assistant Coordinator, Mercediz Hand, LEAP Member and Letty Trujillo, LEAP Member

Judge Bashant introduced and gave a brief introduction of each panelist:

Sam Rigby grew up in San Diego and was in care from age 6-18. He graduated from Cuyamaca Community in 2006 and transferred to UCSD and graduated with a BA in history in 2008. He is currently a graduate student at SDSU and projected to graduate this winter with a Masters in History. Sam is currently the LEAP Program Coordinator for the LEAP Council.

Dimitre Allen is 19 years old Alumni of foster care and currently attends college at Southwestern College studying history. He is currently the LEAP Assistant Coordinator for the LEAP Council.

Letty Trujillo is 25 and aged out of care at 18 ½ and is now living in a transitional living program. She is currently working at Dial America Marketing Inc. and attending San Diego City College majoring in graphic design.

Mercediz Hand is a wife and mother of two. She works downtown at St. Vincent de Paul Village for a new pilot project called Project 25 as the outreach worker and life skills coach. She also attends community college pursuing a degree in Social Work and her future goal is to obtain a Masters degree in the field.

Mr. Rigby introduced the LEAP Council video which was one of the projects to help with recruitment options for the LEAP Council. The video is available for viewing upon request by contacting the Commission office.

Mr. Rigby stated that the LEAP Council is a Leadership Development Program and the three main focus areas are leadership development, community services and peer support.

Mr. Rigby shared the two-page LEAP Speak Out results which is part of the ten page full report which will be shared later this year. The results are from a project LEAP members conducted over a six month period. LEAP Council members conducted focus groups called "speak outs" with current and former foster youth at Polinsky Children's Center, group homes, foster family agencies and other venues. The goal was to have youth led conversations with current and former foster youth on issues facing foster youth and to recommend solutions to achieve better outcomes.

The panel shared some of the top issues expressed by youth at the speak outs including Sibling Separation, Education and Transitioning from Care to Independence.

Mr. Allen reported on Sibling Separation. He stated that he was in foster care and being the baby of the family he often witnessed his family members being separated. At times they were not given the opportunity to know that their sibling was leaving and did not have a chance to say good bye or given a follow up service. Mr. Allen stated that some of the following ideas were offered by the youth as possible solutions to address sibling separation:

- Find more foster families that take siblings, educate foster families about the importance of keeping siblings together, develop and launch a campaign for foster families to take sibling groups.
- Reduce the turnover rate for social workers, increase the number of quality social workers, increase the pay and decrease the case load.
- Support building and sustaining relationships for you with their biological parent/relative. As they age, reassess placement options and support safe options for youth to return home after extended lengths in care.

Mr. Rigby reported on Education. He stated that the youth have expressed how multiple placements for school have affected their learning and motivation toward education. He also reported that the youth didn't feel that the group homes teaching level was adequate for the different levels of students. Some of the following ideals were offered by the youth as possible solutions:

- Teachers and school counselors should be educated on the culture of foster care to better prepare themselves to serve the needs of this population, dispel stereotypes, provide them with educational resources and opportunities unique to them, and to prevent educators from crippling the youths' educations by demanding less of them due to pity.
- Students should attend public school unless there are extreme reasons that prevents them from doing so; it is their right to attend public school.
- Invite community college & university outreach teams to group home sites to talk with youth about options for college, trade school, and scholarships.

Merediz Hand and Letty Trujillo reported on Transitioning from Care to Independence. They reported that youth are still experiencing the shock at how under-prepared they are and how many experience homelessness once they age out. Some have stated they have someone to rely on when they age out and when asked who that person

was, it turned out to be a friend who is no more independent than themselves. Most of the youth do not have job experience, mostly because they can't get out and/or lack of transportation. Ms. Hand stated that ILS needs to have more hands on activities included in program like going out and shopping for food, using an ATM, etc. Some of the following ideals were offered by the youth as possible solutions:

- Develop healthy relationships with a number of adults starting at age 16 before youth age out.
- Include a healthy relationships segment in ILS to prevent domestic violence and other forms of abuse.
- Get foster parents, social workers and ILS to start preparing youth for independent and start at 14 or 15.
- Introduce more hands on/"field trip" experiences where the youth can actually do what they are being taught.
- Open up wait lists for transitional housing as early as age 16.5 or 17

A PowerPoint was presented and is available upon request by contacting the Commission office.

Mr. Rigby stated that the LEAP Speak Out full report will be available for review and can be download at the LEAP Council website.

Judge Bashant and the Commission members commended the panel for an excellent report.

B. San Diego Youth Services TAY Academy presentation; Stephen Carroll, San Diego Youth Services (SDYS)

Stephen Carroll, Director, Homeless/Transition Age Services, San Diego Youth Services reported about the Transition Age Youth Academy which he hopes is one of the solutions to some of the concerns and suggestions presented by the LEAP Council. He stated he appreciates the work of the LEAP Council and the Speak Out events.

Mr. Carroll stated that the TAY Academy is a new center located in the Golden Hill are of San Diego that combines a drop-in center with structured learning and recreational opportunities for Transition Age Youth (TAY) including foster youth, former foster youth, out-of-home probation youth and homeless/runaway youth ages 16 -24. The purpose of the TAY Academy is to provide an environment through which foster, out-of home probation and homeless youth can experience positive growth and development as they prepare for and enter adulthood. The goals are to increase the ability for independent living and self-sufficiency and improve physical and emotional health and wellbeing. San Diego Youth Services has the continuum of care around residential services; an emergency shelter for homeless and runaway youth; group homes for youth awarded dependent of the court, and the Take Wing transitional living program (TLP) as well as the THP Plus program.

Mr. Carroll reported it was noticed that many of the youth were struggling after transitioning from SDYS's shelter and group homes into the Take Wing TLP and THP Plus housing programs, especially within the first three months. SDYS made to the decision to take on a more formal planning process to address the problem by approaching the San Diego Grantmakers and inquiring if they would be interested in funding a formal planning process and they agreed. As part of the planning process, there were over 20 partner organizations involved in the planning including government, community based non-profits (including those who currently serve TAY), and local educational authorities. Many of these organizations including the County of San Diego sent senior staff members to the planning and focus group meetings. A total of 24 youth and 28 adults representing the various agencies engaged in the planning process.

Mr. Carroll stated that the planning activities included:

- Research on best practices and literature review
- Data mining and analysis with the help of HHSA
- Vision and orientation meetings
- Issue focused working groups
- Facilities planning groups
- Partner survey
- One-on-one interviews
- Site visit to two TAY program in LA County
- Youth engagement planning meeting

The planning process assisted in answering some of the questions that were raised of how to proceed with the TAY Academy and helped in establishing some of the outcomes the Academy would like to achieve.

Mr. Carroll stated that the TAY Academy as a model is a drop-in center with structured learning with a two-tier approach to meeting youth at their individual level. The model would be different from ILS or THP Plus programs because it would enhance these programs by filling in the gaps identified by providers and youth during the planning process. The Academy would also serve as a HUB of all things TAY and will be trauma-informed so that all interventions are one-to-one or groups. TAY Academy focus will be on environmental and personal safety and will offer the broadest array of services in the hopes that something will inspire each and every youth.

Aimee Zeitz, on behalf of the San Diego Grantmakers stated that San Diego Grantmakers supports the TAY Academy and the planning process and considers this to be a perfect example of a private-public partnership to solve community challenges.

VII. Announcement

Judge Bashant announced that the next Commission will be held on Friday, November 4, 2011.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Written by Renee Rambus